

Executive Action Briefing ASAP Strategic Focus Area Prescription Drug Abuse

BACKGROUND: On November 13, 2008 the Arizona Substance Abuse Partnership (ASAP) examined the Strategic Focus Area of Prescription Drug Abuse. Discussion focused on strategies that would best equip professionals in prevention, treatment and law enforcement to respond to this growing drug threat to youth and adults. From that meeting came a series of recommendations that, once carried out, will enhance the capacity of the state and its communities to identify and respond to prescription drug abuse. ASAP will coordinate with its member agencies to implement actions to build the capacity to respond to this critical issue.

MISSION: Identify and respond to the complex issues that influence the abuse and use of prescription drugs in Arizona's communities and enhance the state's capacity to monitor the manufacturing, distribution and consumption of all prescription drugs.

STRUCTURE AND ORGANIZATION

Problem #1: Insufficient structures and resources to monitor prescription drug manufacturing, distribution and consumption.

Goal: Direct resources to develop and/or enhance a statewide Controlled Substances Prescription Monitoring Program to provide current data and data analysis of prescription drug abuse in the general population and to establish appropriate initiatives to promote prevention, enhance enforcement and facilitate referral to treatment.

Recommended Action Steps:

- ✓ Appoint a Prescription Drug Abuse Task Force or Working Group to develop a Statewide Comprehensive plan to respond to this emerging threat.
- ✓ Support the implementation of the Arizona State Board of Pharmacy's Controlled Substances Prescription Monitoring Program. Currently, funding for the Program will end on June 30, 2009. In February 2009 the Board of Pharmacy applied for a federal grant to provide financial support for the Prescription Drug Monitoring Program.
- ✓ Educate the public and relevant parties about the Controlled Substances Prescription Monitoring Program.
- ✓ Actively participate in Pharmaceutical Crimes Working Group to enhance enforcement strategies around compliance to state and federal statutes related to the manufacture, distribution and consumption of controlled substances.
- ✓ Review and compare Arizona's A.R.S. title 36, Chapter 28 (Controlled Substances Prescription Monitoring Program) with other states to examine both substance and effectiveness of current statute.
- ✓ Develop language to enhance the Controlled Substances Prescription Monitoring Program to promote treatment alternatives.
- ✓ Enhance monitoring mechanisms in the current statute around *consumption* of prescription drugs.

- The statute should be inclusive of parties not currently required to report to the Prescription Monitoring Program, including but not limited to tribal health facilities, Military and Veteran's Affairs facilities.

Responsible Agency: ASAP will work with Governor's Office for Children, Youth and Families- Division for Substance Abuse Policy to provide direction to partner agencies including the Arizona State Board of Pharmacy, the Drug Enforcement Administration and the High Intensity Drug Trafficking Area (HIDTA).

PREVENTION, TREATMENT AND ENFORCEMENT COMMUNICATION STRATEGIES

Problem #2: Current statutes and programs related to prescription drug abuse monitoring or intervention do not have sufficient controls or messages to promote prevention and treatment in the state's response to prescription drugs in the home or in the community.

Goal: Enlist parents, youth, communities, consumers, the pharmaceutical industry, retailers and policymakers in the development of strategies that demonstrate both the consequences of illegal access to prescription drugs and the consequences of the abuse of prescription drugs.

Recommended Action Steps:

- ✓ The Division for Substance Abuse Policy will help design and implement a prevention and public awareness campaign around prescription drug abuse.
- ✓ ASAP and the Division for Substance Abuse Policy will work with the Substance Abuse Epidemiology Work Group to provide a state data profile of prescription drug abuse in Arizona.
- ✓ Collaborate with organizations such as the Partnership for a Drug-Free America, Arizona State Board of Pharmacy and the Drug Enforcement Administration to educate legislators and other policy makers about the emerging threat of prescription drug abuse.
- ✓ Enhance current statute to include parental accountability language regarding youth access to prescription drugs in the home and develop an appropriate communications strategy about the consequences of failing to prevent youth access.
- ✓ Provide local community coalitions with data on prescription drug abuse in their counties and advance model prevention and intervention strategies.
- ✓ Through the work of community coalitions educate medical providers (including physicians and pharmacists), schools, faith-based organizations and others regarding prescription drug abuse and diversion. Strategies could include pharmacy checklists to prevent medication thefts and physician-patient agreements where narcotics are prescribed.
- ✓ Establish statewide "Take Back" programs with protocols and procedures for collecting and properly disposing of prescription drugs and educate the public and community coalitions about them.
- ✓ Work with the pharmaceutical industry and retailers to provide a fact sheet or pamphlet to consumers to educate them about safeguarding their prescription drugs and properly

disposing unused drugs. Provide guidance to families for the proper storage of prescription drugs.

- ✓ Include cultural competency to address critical populations in all prevention and intervention strategies.
- ✓ A.R.S. Chapter §13-3401 should be amended to refine the drug categories. This will ensure that drugs such as Vicodin® (an opiate) are categorized as a prescription drug instead of as a narcotic drug; reporting on prescription drugs is currently problematic as abuse and possession of drugs like Vicodin® and Oxycontin® are most likely reported along with other narcotics such as heroin and cocaine due to the non-mutual exclusivity of drug categories in A.R.S. Chapter §13-3401.
- ✓ Reporting of drug offenses should be standardized across the state to allow longitudinal and cross-jurisdictional analysis.
- ✓ Develop a pharmaceutical drug diversion training program (approved by AZ POST for continuing training hours) to provide information on current trends and diversion methods to enhance law enforcement investigative capabilities statewide.

Responsible Agency: ASAP will work with Division for Substance Abuse Policy, the Arizona State Board of Pharmacy, Southwest HIDTA, Drug Enforcement Administration, Arizona Department of Education, the pharmaceutical industry and retailers to implement these recommendations.